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Automotive Repair and Smog Check News

A Message from Sherry Mehl, BAR Chief

Promoting Excellence in the Smog Check Program

New tool helps recognize top-performing stations and technicians

Every year, the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) collects millions of pieces of data about motor vehicles and the stations and technicians that test them. For many years, BAR has used this data to identify high-emitting vehicles for repair and retirement. BAR has also used this data to take enforcement actions against stations and technicians failing to comply with the Smog Check Program.

Although this data has been used in a variety of ways, it has not always been readily available — until now.

Beginning later this year, BAR will introduce a Web-based reporting system that will provide Smog Check stations and technicians information about their performance as it relates to the inspection of vehicles. The tool will ultimately serve several practical purposes.

First and foremost, the new Web page will provide stations with accurate and timely information about how well their technicians are performing compared to others. This is significant, as poor performing technicians may need additional training or could be engaging in improper activities. Stations now will have a tool to evaluate their technicians' performance and take corrective steps, hopefully prior to BAR taking an enforcement action.

The tool will also have important implications for stations owners' bottom line. With the passage of Assembly Bill 2289 (Chapter 258, Statutes of 2010), BAR has the authority to limit the testing of directed vehicles to high-performing stations. Stations will now have the ability to evaluate how they are performing in relation to standards established by BAR, for the right to test these vehicles. This is important since stations failing to meet these standards will not be able to inspect these vehicles beginning January 1, 2013.

A key feature of the Web page is the amount of information it contains. Station owners and technicians will find information about how well they perform the required elements of an inspection and whether they properly perform required procedures. There will even be a tool that assesses station and technician performance from each inspection cycle.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the tool is how it benefits consumers, technicians, and stations. Consumers will have better running, more efficient vehicles, resulting in improved air quality. Higher performing technicians will have a way to demonstrate their performance, improving their marketability. Top performing stations will likely see increases in both their inspection volume and repair opportunities. Low performing stations and technicians will now have the feedback they need to improve their performance.